

Daniel Boone, Trailblazer

Series: Legends



The United States Postal Service honored Daniel Boone with his own stamp in 1968.

Most people think of Daniel Boone as a tough woodsman who explored the Kentucky wilderness. But how many people know that he lived in the Tar Heel State for about twenty years? Boone was born and raised near Reading, Pennsylvania. In 1750 he moved with his family to the Yadkin River valley in Davie County, North Carolina. By age sixteen he was earning his living as a hunter. He quickly became known as one of the best hunters and shots in the area. To show off his skills, he competed in shooting matches in Salisbury. He did fancy tricks in the contests, such as firing his rifle with only one hand.

Boone married Rebecca Bryan when he was twenty-one. The couple moved to Rowan County, and Boone built them a log house. He made a living hunting and trading. From 1754 to 1761 he fought in the French and Indian War, in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. In 1766 the Boone family moved west, near Wilkesboro.

In 1769 Daniel Boone left North Carolina for a territory he called *Kante-ke*—Kentucky. He explored the Appalachian Mountains, which were very rugged and wild. With the help of twenty-eight other woodsmen, he blazed the Wilderness Road in 1775. This road soon became the main route to the West. Many people admired Boone for his great accomplishment. Rebecca Boone and some of the Boone children traveled the Wilderness Road just after it was finished to settle with him in Kentucky. She was the first non-Indian woman to live in that state.

Boone worked as a guide, land surveyor, hunter, trader, and military leader over the next fourteen years. But he didn't do well financially, and he eventually lost the land he held in Kentucky. In 1799 Boone moved with his family and some friends to Missouri. In 1814 the United States Congress gave him land there as thanks for his exploration of the area from western North Carolina to Missouri. He died in 1820 at the age of eighty-six.

Many legends grew up about Daniel Boone. Some of them are true, but others are not. According to one legend, Bear Creek in North Carolina got its name the year that Boone killed ninety-nine bears along its banks. No one knows whether or not that legend is true. What do you think? The most famous legend about Boone is that he always wore a coonskin cap. But historians say that he never wore one! He didn't like coonskin caps. He preferred a brimmed hat made from beaver. How and why do you think these stories got started? What legends do you know about other adventurous people like Boone? Just for fun, make up your own legend about Daniel Boone or your favorite explorer.